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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore a possible relationship between involvement in student leadership activities and the development of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT; "queer") campus activists and leaders. This paper focuses on the experience of planning a regional LGBT conference; later papers will explore long-term influences on identify, campus and community involvement, and the development of leadership for social change. Participants were seven LGBT students involved in planning the LGBT conference in 2002 at Michigan State University. Data were collected through interviews and observations of the conference and its planning process. The analyses were primarily based on 6 processes of identity development suggested by A. D'Augelli (1994). The themes identified have implications for student affairs professionals. Data suggest that the D'Augelli model, with its emphasis on interactive processes rather than developmental stages, accurately captures the diverse experiences of student leaders who identify in a variety of ways as LGBT. The important identify influences experienced by the participants support arguments for the creation and maintenance of identity-based organizations and institutions on campus. (Contains 86 references.) (SLD)

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Kristen A. Renn and Brent Bilodeau

November 22, 2002

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Queer Student Leaders: A Case Study of Leadership Development and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Student Involvement

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Michigan State University
ASHE Annual Meeting
November 22, 2002 – Sacramento, California
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A substantial body of theory and research supports the premise that involvement in campus activities leads to student development and learning (e.g. Astin, 1984; Kuh, Hu & Vesper, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). There is also evidence that involvement in activities related to a specific element of identity – such as race or gender – supports exploration of identity construction (e.g. Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Renn, 2000a; Rhoads, 1997a, 1998). It has not been known, however, how involvement in campus activities related to non-heterosexual identity influences lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), or queer, student identities. Based on findings from the first phase of a multi-year longitudinal study of student leaders of a regional conference for LGBT college students and their allies, this paper illuminates connections between the environmental presses encountered by students during conference planning and implementation and the outcomes for their sexual orientation identity development.

The purpose of the longitudinal study is to explore a possible relationship between involvement in student leadership activities and the development of LGBT campus activists and leaders. Specifically, the study is designed to address the question:

What is the relationship between involvement in leadership of a lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) student organization and student outcomes related to:

a) leadership development and

b) LGBT identity?

The subjects of this paper are the immediate and short-term influences of a specific leadership experience in the LGBT student community (planning a regional LGBT conference) on students' identity development. The longitudinal study from which the data for this paper are drawn will continue past students' graduation to explore long-term influences on identity, campus and community involvement, and the development of leadership for social change.

We begin with a brief overview of student involvement and LGBT identity development theories, as well as a short description of the specific leadership context in which study participants were involved. We then describe our research method, including sample, data collection and analysis. We present major themes that we have built thus far from the data. Finally, we discuss the limitations, implications for educational practice, and recommendations for future research.

Background and theoretical framework

This study relies on two intersecting bodies of knowledge: 1) research on college student involvement and outcomes, and 2) research related to the development of LGBT students. Our research participants' decision to become involved in the leadership of an activity explicitly related to their sexual orientation represents the point of intersection, the opportunity to explore how student involvement and leadership might interact with the development of an LGBT

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identity. We first provide a brief description of student involvement and outcomes literature and then describe LGBT identity development theories in the context of higher education.

Influence of campus involvement on student development

A substantial body of theory and research supports the premise that involvement in campus activities leads to student development and learning, including the development of leadership skills and abilities (e.g. Astin, 1993; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Kuh, Hu & Vesper, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). There is also some, though limited, evidence that involvement in campus activities related to a specific element of identity – such as race, sexual orientation, or gender – supports exploration of identity construction (e.g. D'Augelli, 1991; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Renn, 2000b; Rhoads, 1994, 1998). While these findings are not surprising, they provide empirical support for policies, curricula, and programs designed to maximize student learning and developmental outcomes along a range of variables (e.g. critical thinking, communication skills, vocational and career orientation, self-esteem, etc.). Indeed, an entire research industry has evolved from Alexander Astin's postulation (1984) that the more time and effort a student spends on educational activities the greater his or her learning outcomes will be; for example, the goal of such large scale efforts as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse) is to compare measurable input and outcome data – such as hours spent studying and increase in mathematical skill – to evaluate learning conditions on an institutional level.

Projects such as NSSE are designed to provide substantial – and vitally important – information about postsecondary learning environments, but they do not answer equally important questions about how colleges and universities influence student identities in areas such as sexual orientation. To be fair, these are not the questions of central interest to traditional student outcomes researchers, nor are we arguing that they should be. Our point is simply that the literature in this area is inadequate to inform policy and practice. Bieschke, Eberz, and Wilson (2000) reviewed published research pertaining to LGBT students and deemed it "sparse" and, for the most part, "methodologically flawed" (p. 29); while they found numerous studies of LGBT identity development not specific to college students and studies focused on attitudes of others towards LGBT people, among the refereed publications to which they limited their search they located only nine studies directly addressing the LGBT college student. Only two of these (D'Augelli, 1994; Rhoads, 1994) address involvement in campus life and LGBT identity development, leaving educators with little guidance in creating curricula, programs, and services to promote learning and development in LGBT students.

Theories of Non-Heterosexual Identity Development

Stage Models of Identity. Beginning in the 1970s, theoretical perspectives emerged related to homosexual identities and the process of resolving internal conflict regarding same-gender attraction, popularly termed the "coming out" process. These perspectives are reflected by work of Cass (1979, 1984), Coleman (1982), Dank (1971), Fassinger (1991), Goode (1984), Lee (1977), Savin-Williams (1990, 1995, 1998), and Troiden (1984), and suggest that non-heterosexuals move through a series of stages, usually occurring during the teenage years or early twenties. While the number of stages and how they are identified varies, they share a number of common characteristics. Gonsiorek (1995) describes these shared themes as follows.

There is an initial stage in which individuals use multiple defense strategies as a means to block recognition of homosexual feelings, a process that requires a high degree of emotional energy. Often, individuals choose to maintain these defensive strategies for an indefinite period

of time, greatly minimizing same-gender feelings. Over time, this process of expending energy to deny and constrict feelings has negative consequences for overall functioning and self esteem. Yet, for many individuals, a gradual recognition of same-gender feelings and interest emerges. The individual begins to tolerate the reality that significant homosexual feelings are present.

This development is usually followed by a period of emotional and behavior experimentation with homosexuality, and often an increasing sense of normality about same-gender feelings. Some models describe a second crisis after the dissolution of a first relationship when negative feelings about being gay or lesbian reemerge. As the individual again begins to accept his or her same-gender feelings, a sense of identity as gay or lesbian is successfully integrated and accepted as a positive aspect of the self. Gonsiorek (1995) asserts that models vary somewhat on the particulars of these later stages. While most scholars describe the coming out process in discrete stages, they often note that it is generally unpredictable, with stops, starts, and backtracking (Cass, 1979, 1984; Troiden, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990).

Gender Differences. Other scholars identify ways in which gender differences play out during the coming out process. Generally, women "come out" and have homosexual experiences at a sonewhat later age than their male counterparts (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1994; Gramick, 1984; Sears, 1989). The median age at which males become aware of same-sex attractions on a conscious level is between thirteen and fourtneen, whereas females reach this awareness at the median age of eighteen (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1994). Males tend to see their homosexual orientation determined at an earlier age than females (Brown, 1994). Futher, the median age for males having a same-sex encounter is at age fifteen, and for women occurs at about the age of twenty (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1994; Sears, 1989). The amount of sexual experimentation also tends to vary between lesbians and gay males, with gay males engaging in more one-time sexual contacts than lesbians, expecially during the early stages of the coming-out process (Brown, 1994).

Racial-Ethnic Identities and Sexual Orientation. A number of scholars identify the overly Eurocenteric nature of non-heterosexual identity development models (Brown, 1995; Gonsiorek, 1995). There are no well-developed models of non-heterosexual identity development that address the meaning of same-gender relationships in cultures where no clearly defined lesbian, bisexual, and gay identities exist (Brown, 1995). However, there has been an expansion of research regarding the ways race and culture interact with the process of lesbian-bisexual-gay identity development in the United States. More authors are addressing identity issues regarding non-heterosexual African Americans (Boykin, 1996; Ferguson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Icard, 1986; Loiacano, 1989; Waldrep, 1993), Latinos (Cintron, 2000; Diaz, 1997; Espin,1993; Kutsche, 1995; Lumsden, 1996; Leyva, 1991; Murray, 1997; Morales, 1992), Asian Americans (Chan, 1989; Gock, 1992, Hidalgo, 1984, Manalansan, 1993; Takagi, 1996), and Native Americans (Brown, 1997; Brown, Crow, & Wright, 1997; Brown & Jacobs, 1997; LaFromboise, Berman, & Sohi, 1994; Roscoe, 1991; Wilson, 1996).

Bisexual Identities. A number of theories of bisexuality have been described, based on the extent and timing of past and present heterosexual and homosexual behavior. Klein (1978, 1990, 1993) distinguished four kinds of bisexuality: transitional, historical, sequential, and concurrent. According to Klein (1993), for some individuals, bisexuality represents a stage in the process of coming out as lesbian or gay, while for others, a gay or lesbian identity is a step in the process of coming out bisexual (transitional bisexuality). Some individuals, whose sexual lives are presently heterosexual or homosexual, have experienced both same- and opposite-gender attractions or behavior in the past (historical bisexuality). Other individuals have had

relationships with both women and men, but with only one person during a particular period of time (sequential bisexuality), while others have had relationships with both men and women during the same time period (concurrent bisexuality). Other authors (Berkey, Perelman-Hall, & Kurdek, 1990; Boulton & Coxon, 1991) have developed similar theoretical perspectives. Doll, Peterson, Magna, and Carrier (1991), offer additional considerations regarding bisexual behavior and identity: the social context in which the person lives (heterosexual, homosexual or both), the relationship(s) in which the indivdiual is involved, and how open the person is with others about being bisexual.

Challenges to Traditional Stage Models. Theorizing bisexual identities and other perspectives presents a number of challenges to stage models of non-heterosexual identity development. Most authors have conceptualized bisexual identites not as a linear process with a set outcome, as stage models assert, but as a more complex and open-ended process, with a fluid and changing nature (Berkey, Perelman-Hall, & Kurdek, 1990; Boulton & Coxon, 1991; Doll, Peterson, Magna, & Carrier,1991; Fox, 1995; Klein, 1978, 1990, 1993). A further weakness of stage models is their lack of explanations for the roots of feelings. Same-gender attraction is simply assumed to exist (Brown, 1994). Brown (1994) suggests that stage models reflect their development in a time period when the idea of bisexuality did not receive serious consideration.

A Life Span Model of Identity Development. While no model of identity development fully explains all of the complexities of non-heterosexual idenity, D'Augelli (1994) offers a unique model of sexual orientation "life span" development. This model provides perspectives often lacking in other identity development models. D'Augelli (1994) constructs human development through which identity development occurs in a context—the simulateous development of a person's self-concepts, relationships with family, connections to peer groups, and community. The lifespan perspective uses a lens through which sexual and affectional feelings are viewed as variable over a lifetime. D'Augelli (1994) uses the phrase "developmental plasticity" (p. 320) to suggest that human functioning is responsive to both biological factors and environmental circumstances. D'Augelli (1994) suggets that sexual orientation may be very fluid at certain time in the life span and more fixed at others.

D'Augelli (1994) presents six "developmental processes" in the context of the life span model. The processes may occur simlumtaneously, or more independently over the course of a lifetime. Process one, exiting heterosexual identity, involves personal and social recognition that one is non-heterosexual, understanding the nature of one's attractions and labeling them, and defining self as non-heterosexual through coming out to others. Process two, developing a personal lesbian-gay-bisexual identity involves developing the stability that comes from knowing self in the context of contact with other lesbian-bisexual-gay persons, the process of learning how to be non-heterosexual from lesbian-bisexual-gay persons, and challenging internalized myths about homosexuality. Process three, developing a lesbian, bisexual and gay social identity, focuses on developing a breadth of people who know the person's sexual oreintiation and are willing to provide support. Process four, becoming a lesbian-gay-bisexual offspring, recongizes that family relationships are often disrupted with coming out and examins the possiblities of healing those relationships. Process Five, developing a lesbian, gay, bisexual intimacy status, involves the creation of meaningful relationships where physical and emotional intimacy is expressed. Finally, Process Six, entering a lesbian-gay-bisexual community, focuses on the development of a commitment to political and social action and understanding indentiy through the process of challenging social barriers.

Because it presents the greatest opportunity to examine identity development in sociohistorical context (see D'Augelli, 1994, pp. 318-319), we have chosen the D'Augelli model as the framework for exploring the nexus of lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender identity development and queer student leadership. The study participants were immersed in a particular leadership experience on one campus at one time. They identified in a number of ways, and to varying extents, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. There gender identities varied, and they were from different cultural groups. The D'Augelli model, moreso than stage models or models developed for particular gender, racial, or ethnic groups meets the analytical needs of this project.

Study context: The 2002 Midwest Bi-, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender & Allies College Conference (MBLGTACC)

With roots dating back to a conference held in 1991 in Des Moines, Iowa, the first official Midwest LBGT conference was held in 1992 at Emporia State University in Kansas. The conference has been hosted by Indiana University in Terre Haute; Beloit College in Wisconsin; Southern Illinois University in Carbondale; Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana; Iowa State University in Ames; University of Illinois at Chicago; University of Wisconsin, Madison; St. Cloud University in St. Cloud, Minnesota; the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing in 2002. The Midwest Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay Transgender and Ally College Conference (MBLGTACC) is one of the largest of its type in the nation. Over a decade, attendance grew from a few hundred, to 600 in 1997, with a record attendance of 1400 in 1998 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2002, the MSU conference drew approximately 1100 individuals. The MBLGTACC has been affectionately nicknamed "the Big Gay Conference," and its volunteers "the Big Gay Staff" (Jiang, 2001, ¶ 2). It is usually held from a Friday evening to a Sunday noon in mid-February, though lack of available facilities caused the conference at MSU to be held in March.

The conference has a strong history of being predominately student-lead with teams of students serving in coordinating roles. Institutional staff, usually those connected with LBGT resource centers, provide varying degrees of support and coordination. At MSU, the conference was highly student lead and directed, with one full-time staff member, a graduate assistant, and a well-respected campus police officer serving in advising roles. The conference coordinating committee structure included by two-co chairs, with a variety of subcommittee chairs, including public relations, entertainment, finance, outreach, workshops, and hospitality.

The mission and goals of the MBLGTACC are many and varied. The following "statement of purpose" has appeared on conference host websites since at least 1998:

> The Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Ally college conference seeks to: provide a safe and supportive forum for discourse about diverse issues of interest to LBGTA youth; educate participants about HIV/AIDS prevention, building activism sexuality and gender; examine the relationship between sexism, racism and homophobia; Foster localized, grassroots networking among LBGT youth and their allies; promote visibility of LGBT individuals and organizations throughout the Midwest. (MBLGTACC, 2002, Purpose and Goals)

At Michigan State University, this mission was realized through over 80 diverse workshops, and keynote speakers including James Earl Hardy, Joo-Hyun Kang, Rev. Penny Nixon, and Leslie Feinberg. Entertainment included Ellis, Catie Curtis, and the Kinsey Sicks. The 2002 Conference also included the National Premier of the "Transgender Monologues" and,

for the first time, evening caucus sessions were offered for specific populations, such as students of color, women, and gender-non-conformists.

As the conference rotates institutions, each host college is responsible for selecting the site for the subsequent conference. Written proposals are submitted to a student committee serving as the site selector. MBLGTACC organizers also select a theme each year. In 1998, *The Advocate* recognized the University of Illinois at Chicago for "best conference theme," in recognition of its "Across the Fruited Plain" slogan. In 2002, The Michigan State University student coordinating committee selected the theme of "Still Moving Forward," to recognize the 10th anniversary of MSU's 1992 Task Force Report on Lesbian and Gay Issues, "Moving Forward."

Methods

Because of the exploratory nature of this case study – that is, the exploration of a possible relationship between involvement in a particular, time and place bound involvement context and the development of LGBT identity and leadership skills – we determined that qualitative methods were most appropriate for addressing the research question (see, for example, Manning, 1992, p. 133; Rossman & Rallis, 1998, pp. 5-7). Furthermore, the use of qualitative methods produced thick, descriptive data that was useful in seeing relationships between involvement and identity that might have remained transparent had we used quantitative measures of involvement and outcomes.

Participants

Participants were seven LGBT-identified undergraduate students who were involved in planning the 2002 MBLGTACC conference at Michigan State University. Patton (1990) and Miles & Huberman (1994) recommend purposeful sampling for rich cases, and the LGBT student leaders involved in conference planning represent such a sample. To facilitate reading the themes we interpreted in the data, we present a brief introduction to the seven students.

Alix: A white, female student athlete who identified as and transgender and pansexual ("the term "bisexual" doesn't suffice, because it's one or the other – men or women – and I'm attracted to both), was a sophomore at time of conference.

Ashley: A white lesbian, had transferred from a community college, was in her first year at MSU, and her third year in college.

Christopher: An African American gay man, was a sophomore and a sociology major.

Denise: An African American lesbian, was in her fourth year at the time of the conference and stayed at MSU for a fifth year to complete a telecommunications degree.

Jo: A white, bisexual woman, was a junior math major.

Mike: A white gay man, was a journalism major in his fifth year at the time of the conference.

TJ: A female international student, trans identified, was a junior at the time of the conference.

Researchers

In order best to assess the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of our data collection, analyses, and subsequent interpretations, it is important to know a bit about us as researchers and the experiences and biases we bring to this study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 45). A white gay man, Brent is a full-time student affairs professional at Michigan State University (MSU),

responsible for the provision of programs and services related to LGBT issues on campus. He is a member of the National Consortium of LGBT Campus Resource Directors and also a PhD student in the Higher, Adult, & Lifelong Education (HALE) at MSU. In his professional role, he advised the MBLGTACC planning committee. Prior to and following the conference planning, he had working relationships with several of the students involved; he is an advisor, mentor, and role model to many of them.

Kristen is a white lesbian faculty member in the HALE program at MSU. In her previous work in student affairs administration, she coordinated programs and services for LGBT students at Brown University. She remains professionally connected to the National Consortium of LGBT Campus Resource Directors, though she no longer works directly with undergraduate students. One of the student participants (TJ) took a course with Kristen, who is now the faculty supervisor for an independent study project this student is conducting on international LGBT students. Kristen had no prior relationship with any of the other student participants.

Data collection

We collected data through individual interviews, supplemented with observations of the conference (as a participating presenter) by Kristen and of the planning process and the conference (as staff adviser) by Brent. Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (see appendix) that inquired about students' experiences with the conference, LGBT identity, and leadership. Four of the interviews were conducted by both authors, two by Kristen alone, and two by Brent alone. Interviews lasting from 50-90 minutes were audiotaped and transcribed. Focus groups and additional interviews will be conducted each semester until students graduate.

In addition to interviews, we will collect available print, electronic, or other media related to students' leadership experiences; examples include program descriptions, flyers, meeting agendas or minutes, and student newspaper articles. These materials will be used to supplement data collected during interviews and to form a comparison point from which to enhance trustworthiness of findings (i.e. to "triangulate" data).

Data analyses and interpretation

The interpretive framework for the larger study from which this paper is drawn includes the constant comparative method and the generation of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1998) consider grounded theory methodology appropriate for generating theory from data, particularly in an exploratory study such as this one. For this paper, however, we focus on the intersection of involvement and LGBT identity development and have elected to analyze data guided by D'Augelli's (1994) six identity processes. We compare interview data to the model, refining and elaborating on it as appropriate (for a discussion of using existing theories to guide qualitative data analysis, see Boyatzis, 1998; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Separately, we analyzed an initial transcript using the six identity processes as primary codes. We concurred substantially on the coding schema, and having achieved a satisfactory level of inter-rater reliability, we divided the remaining transcripts for coding.

Findings and Themes

In terms of applying the D'Augelli (1994) identity development model to the experiences of LGBT student leaders, the overarching finding from this phase of the longitudinal study is that the context of leading LGBT student activities provides rich opportunities for development in

each of the six interactive identity processes. We found ample evidence to support student development in each process, as well as important cross-process interactions. In this section, we illustrate the six processes with student data, then present additional themes related to LGBT identity development in the context of the specific student leadership context we examined (the planning group for the MBLGBTACC).

D'Augelli's (1994) six interactive processes: Evidence from the data

Process 1: Exiting heterosexual identity. Some participants entered MSU already having negotiated the initial process of exiting heterosexual identity, while others first engaged this process after they came to college. Ashley said, "After I graduated from high school, I joined a youth support group in my town and that helped me become out." At his campus job, Mike was "very open," though "it's not like I said, 'Hey, I'm big gay Mike.' If anyone asked I just told them the truth." Denise worked in the cafeteria with a woman who was a leader of their residence hall's LGBT student caucus:

> I saw her one day and I saw her Pride necklace. And I was like no way close to being out at this point. But it made me stop and I was like, "Yeah." So I went up to her and I didn't tell her I was a lesbian or anything. I just said I just wanted to talk to her, just to have somebody there. When I finally did tell her that, she was like, "Oh, you should come [to the caucus]." I went and I was, she could really tell I was still like really nervous.

Involvement in the conference provided opportunities for some students to further the process of exiting heterosexual identity, both personally and publicly. More reticent about disclosing his identity before planning the conference, Mike said, "When I did the conference, I was definitely out. And to literally everybody and their dog for about two years now." And although Ashley said, "Since I've been out to myself I've been pretty much out everywhere," she acknowledged that "it's always uncomfortable the first week of certain classes," before she had come out publicly to peers; she added that being involved in planning the conference "helped...every little bit, I think, helps me be more out in a way. More comfortable." A student newspaper article related to the conference outed Jo in ways that she found relieving:

> People don't think, like I don't look gay. And people usually say, "Wow, you don't look gay!" So I have to actively come out to every single person I meet, and it gets to be so tiring and draining that I just don't do it half the time. So for [the conference] to be an avenue where people can be like, "Oh, I read in the newspaper that you were a lesbian," that's really good for me because they can deal with it on their own and I don't have to educate. That's really helped me too. It's a way that I don't have to do so much work to come out.

Christopher attributed some of his exiting heterosexuality process directly to involvement with the conference planners. One of the co-chairs of the conference was a man who inspired him to use an LGBT leadership role to counter feelings of depression related to concealing a non-heterosexual identity. Christopher told us, "Like I said, the people you meet can really help you come out." For Christopher, coming out provided a release from anxiety and depression:

> I think it's very important to come out like this, I mean when you're ready, because you really can get some peace of mind. And you can actually do some things besides worry about being gay. Because I was like just sitting there and being down and worrying about everything. To me coming out was like, "Okay, I can stop worrying about it." That's what it's like when you come out.

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D'Augelli's (1994) conflation of "personal and social recognition that one's sexual orientation is not heterosexual" (p. 325) into the same process, and the very close connection of these recognitions with Process 2 (personal lgb identity status) and Process 3 (lgb social status), make it difficult to designate examples like Christopher's solely to Process 1, yet they illustrate the ways in which participation in the conference contributed to ongoing achievement of this developmental process.

Process 2: Developing a personal lbg[1] identity status. Before, during, and after MBLGTACC, the students we interviewed were learning "to how to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual, with these constructs defined by their proximal community of lesbians, gay men, or bisexual people" (D'Augelli, 1994, p. 325). The conference planning and conference itself provided specific opportunities to engage this learning. Jo found the leadership experience empowering:

> I didn't realize the lasting impact that the conference would have on this campus and on the individuals who planned it, and the participants. I didn't realize I guess because that was the first conference like that that I'd ever attended. I didn't realize how empowering it would be, to be involved with it. So I think the whole experience surpassed my expectations of what I thought I'd get out of it. I kind of thought it would be something that I planned and helped out with, and just one more job on the list of things that I do, but I really think that I got a lot out of it personally.

Jo's personal queer identity status is inextricably linked to her identity as a queer activist. Indeed, she said,

> I don't think I would be as out as I am if it wasn't for activism. Because when you're an activist, you're forced out of the closet by the fact that your face in on the front page of a newspaper. There's no one on this campus who reads the *State News* who doesn't know who I am and about my involvement with the Alliance [of LGBT Students].

Not out as broadly as Jo, Denise and Christopher described the ways in which the conference transformed their identities. Messages Denise received at the conference about identity, community, and pride sank in and percolated over the summer:

> I felt like once the conference was over, I felt more out. Because when I was there it was like, you're totally out because everybody there is feeling the same. They're on the same wavelength in a certain respect. It was like with the rainbow colors everywhere. And if I'm going to act like a guy, I'm going to. And people are cool with that. That was a comforting feeling.
>
> After the conference I think I really felt like carrying on after the conference ended into how I acted. With me, my personal situation, it didn't carry on directly after, but I kept those kinds of things in mind and it just kind of sat there through the summer. I'm out. I've got this [rainbow flag] on my bag and I'm just out fully. Everybody knows. It's a great feeling, and I believe the conference was doing that. ... Seeing all those people is like a glimmer of hope. Oh my gosh, there's so many of us out there and you just don't know. I think indirectly and directly it helped me to get to the point where I am today.

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[1] We use "lgb" because this is D'Augelli's (1994) designation. We are aware of the important distinctions between sexual orientation and gender identities. Two participants (TJ and Alix) identified as transgender, and we will address gender identity later in the paper. For the most part, quotes in this section describe sexual orientation, except when we refer specifically to gender identity.

Christopher's involvement in the conference leadership meant that he had to interact with staff members on campus whom he did not know and who did not know anything about his identity. One particular meeting was a watershed moment in the formation of his individual gay identity. Christopher had been involved in planning concerts on campus and brought his production experience to the entertainment subcommittee. The subcommittee ended up meeting with administrators to discuss details of contracts, technical needs, etc.

> We were trying to come up with all the information. And they invited me an [name] and a couple of other people were there. It was like a really big step because I kind of got to see how everything worked inside. Obviously I was there because I was gay, so it was like, well it was a big step. And that was for the conference… That was a pretty big step. I wasn't really nervous before going there, but I think it's been a bunch of small little steps that have led to being more comfortable. But I think that's probably one of them.

As a result of being in a meeting where "obviously" he was there because he was gay, Christopher became more comfortable with his gay identity. Through his involvement with other student leaders, he also found role models for being an out gay man: "I mean really when you're around people and you associate with people who are where you want to be it changes you. I didn't have a profound impact or role in the conference, but it really did a lot fore me." Though Christopher, Denise, and Jo were at very different places in their personal identities as LGB people, participation in the conference influenced them all in this identity development process; and as in each illustration, the interaction between Process 2 (individual identity) and Process 3 (social identity) is evident throughout the data.

Process 3: Developing an lgb social identity. Though D'Augelli (1994) makes mention in his description of the third process that a social identity might include being part of networks of people who do not support queer identity, in relationship to the MBLGTACC students described mainly supportive, positive relationships. New on campus, Ashley joined the conference committee in part to develop a new social network; "I was interested in it for the experiences, for fun, to get to know other people on campus." Of the committee, she said, "It was nice to not have to explain myself or identify myself or feel uncomfortable or wonder who's going to judge or anything in that regards." In fact, MSU was not the first four-year university Ashley entered after transferring from her community college; she spent a semester at another large university where she "didn't become involved with many of their campus activities because [she] could not find any kind of community there." The availability of a social network where she could feel not judged or uncomfortable was important to Ashley – important enough to move herself and her partner to MSU from another institution.

Involvement with the MBLGTACC planning committee was a step in TJ's evolution as an LGBT campus leader and an important moment the development of her queer social identity. As a first and second year student, TJ was involved in LGBT residence hall caucuses. In her third year, in a different residential area and a new residential caucus, "which was a lot more active. It has a lot of membership. That got me a lot more riled up." She also met Alix, who was that caucus' president at the time and "developed a very, very close friendship with her. I started getting more involved because she was." TJ also enacted a public queer identity within the international student community as a member of SOCIAL (Same Gender Loving Students of Color, Internationals, and Allies).

> I think coming here, because I had bad experiences at home, I tried to detach myself a lot from the whole international student identity. I have been involved with a lot of international groups. I was a little involved with the Armenian Club for a little bit, but

> sensed discomfort with that community. So I stayed away. ... Then, I think it was when SOCIAL was created that I started to be like, "Oh, yeah, I am an international student as well as LBGT, so I might be an additional to that from now on."

Though unable to attend many meetings because of conflicts with her work schedule, TJ viewed SOCIAL as an important part of her network of support on campus. SOCIAL was also important to Denise and Christopher as they negotiated intersecting identities as LGBT people of color on campus, and the three made special efforts to include students of color and international student issues in the MBLGTACC program through speakers, entertainment, workshops, and caucuses. The creation of space within the conference for a supportive social network for queer students of color and international students was a point of pride for several committee members interviewed, no matter what their racial, ethnic, or national background.

Alix, who was a role model for TJ, described the ways she developed an lgb social identity on campus and the ways that involvement in the campus community contributed to her development. After a very bad experience coming out to her first-year roommate (which involved the roommate posting Nazi slogans in their room in response to Alix's rainbow poster and outing Alix to the homophobic intercollegiate athletic team on which Alix played), Alix came out to her Resident Mentor (akin to a Resident Advisor) and found supportive social spaces on campus that eventually led to her involvement in the MBLGTACC planning group.

> My mentor my freshman year. We actually both came out to each other at the same time. Well, she's bisexual. So she was a big help. I came out to her and she told me about [the residence hall LGBT caucus]. And she was planning on going. Because I was kind of upset that my team wasn't real supportive, I went there very much for the support aspect. I didn't need to be counseled necessarily, I was OK with myself being queer, but I just needed to be in an environment where there were a lot of other queer people and we could just talk about whatever. So I guess talking to my mentor and being uncomfortable with my team my freshman year was kind of my first step into getting involved.

Chairing the residential caucus led to involvement with the Alliance and then with the conference committee, which, in turn expanded Alix's social network and visibility on campus.

As we stated earlier, Processes 1, 2, and 3 are fairly interactive, with progress in one area creating developmental presses in others and vice-versa. In the context of the MBLGTACC leadership group, Process 3 was also closely linked to Process 6 (entering an lgb community). We turn now, however, to Process 4 (becoming an lgb offspring), which was one of the less evident processes in our data.

Process 4: Becoming an lgb offspring. D'Augelli (1994) claimed, "Parental relationships are often temporarily disrupted with the disclosure of sexual orientation" (p. 326). He concentrated his discussion of this process primarily on relationship with the family of origin. While we would advocate a definition of family that reached beyond being an "offspring" or sibling, we appreciate D'Augelli's attention to this important location of sexual orientation identity development.

In part because our interview protocol focused on campus experiences, and experiences with the MBLGTACC in particular, students did not discuss family relationships to any great extent. The few examples that we have, however, indicate some of the diversity of students' experience in this area. TJ contrasted her gender identity on campus, where "pretty much everyone knows" she identifies as trans, with her experience at home: "Off campus it's kind of tricky. A lot of relatives and family know, but it's not talked about." Jo described how her father, a "straight, white, middle-class man – name a privilege and he's got it, admits that he can't

understand where I'm coming from," though she did not describe any particular conflict or lack of specific support from her family. In Christopher's senior year in high school, his father died, a circumstance to which Christopher attributes some of his subsequent depression. Of his mother, he said

> This year [his junior year] I actually came out to my mom about a month or a month and a half ago. … It went very well. I think she kind of knew for a while just because I never had a whole lot of girls around me and supposedly I could have. She caught me with my boyfriend one time. So that was kind of obvious. So she took it pretty well. She said, "I still love you. You're still my son." So we can pretty much talk about it. So that was a good thing, too. If you can tell yourself, "Okay, my mom is accepting of it," who gives a damn what anybody else thinks?

The other four students did not mention parents or family members. None of these comments relates to students' experience with the conference, or even with LGBT campus leadership. They do, however, help us to understand the context of our participants' leadership activities in their lives as young queer adults. The conference itself featured one workshop related to families and parents, entitled "You're Out of the Closet, So Why are Your Family and Friends Still In?" and led by two PFLAG members.

Process 5: Developing an lgb intimacy status. D'Augelli (1994) focused on the challenging aspects of developing "same-sex dyadic relationships," citing the "invisibility of lesbian and gay couples in our cultural imagery," "the view that gay men are solitary and cannot form relationships of any duration because of sexual excesses," and the unavailability to gays and lesbians of "social and cultural apparatuses for heterosexual bonding" (p. 327). While our participants did not discuss these challenges, several did discuss relationship issues in the context of planning and running the conference. Ashley, for example, described her experience managing full time academics, student leadership, and a relationship with her partner – a combination that illuminated peer culture, among other elements:

> It's hard to juggle. It's been fun because my partner Kate has been more involved with activism now, and she was involved a little bit with the conference. But it's difficult because it still is, just trying to find time to do everything, and my commitment to the relationship and spending time with her is definitely difficult. And it's also difficult to be a student and not have people understand why I don't got out and party until 2 am every weekend, and why I didn't want to stay at the conference center during the conference because that would have been the only time for me to spend time with Kate all week. It's definitely difficult, it's well worth it. But it's a different perspective that most people do not understand.

Instead of reflecting D'Augelli's concerns about a lack of role models for long-term same-gender relationships, Ashley focused on the same issues any undergraduate leader in a relationship with a non-student might face. And she integrated Kate into the conference, creating a shared experience of activism in the queer community, albeit a community in which Kate was not usually an active member.

Denise described a different experience with "lgb intimacy status" and queer campus leadership. Asked to describe a challenging experience related to the conference, Denise replied

> What's kind of hard is that because you're dealing with the same people, you're working with the same people. And personal relationships get intertwined with professional relationships. I had issues with that last year. That makes things hard in terms of going to the conference and it's just like, "I'm not with…" That makes things difficult because

> we're just a small community. People recycle people, if you will, and you know what I mean, because you don't have too many choices there. So, that made it hard personally for me.
>
> I was struggling with a lot of stuff anyway, which I don't even want to get into but if I'm struggling with myself and then something relationship-wise goes wrong too and then you have to see this person like at everything, it makes it hard. Because you just don't want to deal. Like that's the last thing you want to see, and you have to talk to them because they're involved and you're involved and it's just like, "Ugh. I don't want to talk to you right now. I don't want to see you." And you have to. So like parts of the conference I was like, "I don't even want to be here because I don't want to be around that."
>
> It makes it tough if you don't have it within you to separate the professional from the personal. And a lot of it is that their personal group is there and you feel like, "Okay, well ---"

Whereas Ashley brought her non-student partner to the MBLGTACC, Denise found the community of student leaders too small to withstand the pressure of dealing with a woman with whom she had been involved but was no longer. She described the small community as one in which relationships (and the people in them) got "recycled," such that the "personal relationships got intertwined with the professional relationships" in uncomfortable ways. D'Augelli (1994) does not address this issue in his identity development processes, though the students might be said to be reacting in ways that reflect "the emergence of personal, couple-specific, and community norms" he says results from the "lack of cultural scripts directly applicable to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people" (p. 327). If nothing else, Ashley and Denise's experiences illustrate the ways that personal intimate relationships interact with the public processes of leadership in a queer student community.

Process 6: Entering an lgb community. Although some students described off-campus LGBT communities, we concentrate here on their experiences on campus. We espouse D'Augelli's (1994) notion that this process relates to "the development of commitments to political and social action" (p. 327); these students were involved in a number of community building activities, including planning the MBLGTACC. Conference involvement contributed significantly to their progress in this identity process, but progress in Process 6 also contributed to development in Processes 1, 2, and 3.

During the planning and conference, Ashley was a new transfer student and also a complainant in a case to the Anti-Discrimination Judicial Board (ADJB) involving the denial of equitable benefits to her same-sex domestic partner (in this case, a denied request to live together with her non-student partner in a campus apartment; married undergraduates are permitted to live with non-student spouses on campus). Ashley found the ADJB process "exciting, very disturbing, exhausting, empowering, but also discouraging." The opportunity to reinforce her personal lesbian identity (Process 1) with a group of other LGBT-identified people on the conference committee (Processes 2 and 6) was an important source of support and balance.

> During the conference it was still part of our gathering all the data we needed for the case. ... It was nice because with the [ADJB process] I had to work so hard to prove something. But with the conference it was nice, because everybody there was on the same level. ... I was strong with people that were like-minded and similar interests and issues. I mean, you could really see progress being made and the direct involvement with the community and just direct activism. That would be the best part.

Aside from the ADJB complaint, Ashley's involvement with the conference helped her connect with and create a space within the LGBT community on campus:

> The first couple Alliance meetings I felt really like an outsider, because I felt like, since I was a transfer student, I felt like everybody else had already known each other and connected and worked with each other. But after the conference I didn't feel that at all – and during the conference, too.

Involvement with the conference clearly contributed to Ashley's progress in this identity development process.

For TJ, sexual and gender identity development processes and her student leadership development were also tightly linked, each contributing to the other:

> I started identifying to myself as a lesbian when I was about 10 or 12. But I kept that pretty much to myself until coming to college. Then I came out at bi at first, then later on I came out as lesbian a couple years later when I felt a lot more comfortable telling people. Then last year, I came out as transgender. … I guess since coming out as trans I've been a lot more comfortable doing a lot of things that I normally wouldn't be. I guess it comes with a lot of people's same experiences with coming out. They just become more bold, I guess. … The more comfortable I was in talking about my various identities, the more comfortable I felt taking on leadership. … I think as my coming out process evolved, I started getting more involved with actual leadership. Then, this year, I was elected to External Vice Chair of the Alliance.

At one point during the interview, TJ used a queer metaphor to describe her campus activism, "I was still coming out as a leader." The interaction between community involvement and identity development were clear in her mind.

Alix, whom TJ emulated as a leader, was deeply involved in conference planning and then became the chair of the campus-wide Alliance of LGBT Students (the Alliance). Her commitment to activism and social justice were evident in her interview; she appeared not only to want to "enter" a queer community in D'Augelli's (1994) terminology, but to build it, to sustain it, and to challenge it to be more inclusive.

> Now we're going to start working on gender identity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination policy, and domestic partnership benefits for students. … And also I see my role this year as coalition building with a lot of other groups, making sure the LGBT community is inclusive of persons with multiple identities and oppressions.

Alix credits her commitment to queer activism and her involvement in the queer community with changing, perhaps even saving, her life.

> There was a point in my freshman year, my first semester. … I was just not feeling welcome on the team at all. I got kicked out of practice because I showed up late, and everyone was really angry at me, and I didn't feel included because I was out. … My roommate hated me, she didn't stay in our room. I just felt very ostracized. And I was kind of sitting at home one day, and I realized that if I didn't ever show up again, that is something had happened to me, I didn't think anyone would care. So I was suicidal for a couple of months. And that was really hard for me – that was a hard time in my life.
>
> And I didn't really realize it was linked to my sexuality at first, but when I made the decision to become an activist, when I made the decision that this is what I actually wanted to do with my life, that actually saved my life. It was committing to that, it was realizing that I can do something to help other people with this. That changed the way I looked at myself, and that was a way to get myself through things when I didn't really

think other people liked me, I didn't like myself. I thought that I could serve a role, a larger role. That was a big turning point too.

Part of Alix's activism was her involvement with the conference. She joined the conference planning group during her first year – around the time she made the powerful decision to become an activist and to "serve a role, a larger role" in creating a queer community.

Summary of findings related to the six processes. Choosing only a few examples from the many in our data, we have attempted to illustrate the ways in which D'Augelli's (1994) six interactive processes were made manifest through the experiences of seven LGBT campus leaders. It seemed clear to us that the processes were in action in the lives of these students, that they were triggered by specific aspects of the student leadership experience, and that they operated more or less as D'Augelli proposed that they might: as independent, but interrelated, processes of identity development rather than as some stage-model approach to sexual orientation identity development were achievement of one was required before achievement of another was possible.

Additional themes in the data.

While we were coding primarily for evidence of D'Augelli's (1994) six processes, we made note of other related themes. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss them all fully, but several of them bear noting. First, the two students of color (Denise and Christopher) and the one international student (TJ) described powerful experiences within their cultural communities of figuring out what it meant to have a non-heterosexual identity. The student organization SOCIAL was an important location of these experiences, but they also occurred through interactions with predominantly white and domestic student groups.

Second, the two transgender students (Alix and TJ) underwent parallel processes of sexual orientation identity development and gender identity development. We are not inclined to apply D'Augelli's (1994) model indiscriminately to gender identity development, but we did see similarities between the processes for sexual orientation and gender identity development. For example, Process 1 could be translated to address "exiting a binary gender identity system," Process 2 could become "developing a personal transgender identity," and so on. Indeed, we found evidence in the data that these processes were occurring for Alix and TJ in the campus context.

Third, we identified some specific interactions between and among D'Augelli's (1994) processes. If the "community" described in Process 6 is defined as a specific queer campus community, for example, then intimate relationships between community members (Process 5) and the establishment of social identity (Process 3) could strongly affect how one enters this community – more strongly than might be the case in a less bounded queer community such as those that exist off campus or in larger cities.

The fourth theme we noted relates to the role of student communities that existed outside of institutional structures. Ashley remarked that she transferred to MSU from a campus that had a notable queer infrastructure but lacked an accessible student community. A number of students commented on the importance of peer culture in how comfortable they felt in established LGBT student organizations on campus and informal queer networks.

Finally, and because it was the second part of our research question, we noticed a number of themes related to student leadership, the development of "leader" and "activist" identities, and the intersections of specific activities (e.g., public speaking, being in the newspaper, dealing with campus administrators) with specific developmental outcomes (e.g., organizational. time

management, delegation, or communication skills). In addition, students' senses of themselves as leaders and the ways in which they described that development were testaments to the significance of student involvement. Astin (1984) was right; involvement is a powerful mechanism for learning and development.

There is not space in this paper to discuss each of these themes in detail, nor was that our goal. We present them here only to alert the reader to some of the other themes we created from the interview data. We turn now to a brief discussion of limitations, implications and possibilities for further research.

Limitations

The study as presented here is limited by the scope of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Interviewing only seven students from one institution, and limiting the sample to students involved in a particular leadership activity (the conference planning), it is impossible to make broad statements about the applicability of the D'Augelli (1994) model to the identity of LGBT college student leaders. The identities of the researchers no doubt affected the data collected, though this limitation is not particular to this study. We do not know the effect of having one interviewer already known to the students (Brent) and one who was new to them (Kristen). We suspect that the data is richer for students' comfort with Brent and Kristen's ability to ask questions from an "outsider" perspective (albeit as a lesbian herself); perhaps it is less rich for students' reticence with an administrator with whom they have an ongoing relationship (Brent again) and for their unfamiliarity with a faculty member (Kristen).

We decided to limit our analysis and interpretation for this paper primarily to using D'Augelli's (1994) six processes of identity development. We therefore missed opportunities for other ways of seeing the data or themes within it. We look forward to re-coding data from an open perspective to build our own coding system in a grounded theory style (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We believe, though, that our efforts to obtain inter-rater reliability were successful and that we were coding substantially similarly across all of the transcripts, even within the limited code system we developed for the six processes. And although we limited our analyses and interpretations to the D'Augelli model, we believe that there are some important implications of our findings for practice and future research

Implications for improved educational practice and areas for future research

As one current and one former higher education administrator with responsibility for overseeing LGBT campus issues, we are especially interested in the ways our research may intersect with student affairs professional practice. Although scholars and practitioners have pointed to the need to improve student development practice in the area of LGBT concerns (e.g. Blumenfeld, 1993; Croteau & Lark, 1995; Evans & Rankin, 1998; Evans & Wall, 1991; Fassinger, 1998; McRee & Cooper, 1998), there is little evidence that student affairs professionals have adequate attitudes, knowledge, or skills to do so (Talbot, 1996; Talbot & Kocarek, 1997). In part, this lack represents a gap in the preparation of new student affairs professionals through graduate programs (Talbot & Kocarek, 1997), but it also derives from a dearth of empirical research on LGBT students, their identities, and the processes leading to identity development. Fassinger (1998), stated "To be helpful, Student Affairs professionals need to be aware of the models of LGBT identity development and the 'coming out' process, as well as the potential impact of LGB identity on other theories and models of student development" (p. 14), but her proposition lacks the empirical support that a study like this one can provide. Given

the finding of Bieschke et al. (2000) that there are only two empirically sound studies in of LGBT identity development in college students, Fassinger's call for awareness may fall on ready but ill-informed ears.

There are, however, promising practices underway in several student affairs functional areas. Career counselors have created a "mentoring web" to provide guidance and role models to LGBT students (Nauta, Saucier, & Woodard, 2001; Van Puymbroeck, 2001); residence halls at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst provide interest housing for LGBT-identified students (Herbst & Malaney, 1999); and over 90 institutions have LGBT campus resource centers providing programs and services (see Ritchie & Banning, 2001). Still, few of these efforts have been evaluated to determine their efficacy in promoting student learning and development; none have been evaluated with the purpose of examining how the program or service influences LGBT identity development along D'Augelli's (1994) or anyone else's framework.

Prompted by the dearth of research in the area and the clear need for student affairs professionals to know more specifically about the interactions of LGBT identity development and student affairs practices, we ask: What might be learned from the experiences of the seven LGBT leaders in the first phase of our longitudinal study that might lead to improved educational practice? and What additional research is needed in this area?

First, we propose that an increased understanding of how student involvement in identity-based leadership activities contributes to learning and developmental outcomes could lead to improved educational practice. Understanding, for example, how elements in the campus leadership context promote or inhibit identity development processes could provide empirical support for creating leadership and involvement opportunities that maximize developmental outcomes. Gesturing in this direction, Sanlo (2002) offered "the UCLA model of LGBT leadership: the LGBT Student Leader Roundtable" (pp. 143-147) as an example of an effective merging of LGBT identity development theory (she used Cass, 1979) and student leadership development practice. Empirical testing of this model, and others like it in practice across the nation, would provide needed support for continuation and improvement.

Second, we concur with Rhoads (1997b) that "a variety of developmental stage models have suggested that 'identity pride' (often discussed as 'immersion') stages are not an end point, but instead represent a lower level of identity development" (p. 517) and join him in asking

> If racial minorities and lesbian, gay, and bisexual people have significant cultural barriers to overcome throughout society, what good does it do to situate passion toward group identification as a stage to work through on their way to a calmer, more synthesized identity? (p. 517)

Our data indicate that the D'Augelli (1994) model, with its emphasis on interactive processes rather than developmental stages, accurately captures the diverse experiences of student leaders who identify in a variety of ways as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender. To paint this highly engaging and engaged group of students as less than fully developed (as Cass' 1979 model, among others, would) seems a disservice. Rhoads (1997b) asks who is served by "the normalization of a less radicalized identity" (p. 517), and we, too, wonder if it is useful for student affairs professionals to understand student activists (LGBT or any others) as underdeveloped.

Third, we question the assumption of many student affairs professionals that LGBT campus organizations provide services (such as counseling and programs) that help student participants/clients (i.e. those students who receive the services or attend the programs) develop identity rather conceiving of student leadership itself as a way to develop identity. While LGBT

student leaders are sometimes included in leadership development programs on campus (as we believe they should be), and while the benefits to identity development of group members are often acknowledged, our data supports a different approach, one that takes the LGBT identity development of student leaders as a central purpose. It is not an "either/or" situation – either you participate in the group and develop LGBT identity or you lead the group and develop leadership skills; LGBT student leadership is an extension of identity development and provides new venues for the deployment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer identities. Such an approach calls for a re-examination of leadership education programs to incorporate experiences and skills specific to identity-based leadership settings and an acknowledgement that there are cultural distinctions among identity-based groups.

The important identity development influences the seven students encountered during their LGBT leadership experiences support arguments for the creation and maintenance of identity-based organizations and institutions on campus. As Kristen has argued elsewhere (Renn, 2000a, forthcoming), identity-based spaces on campus, whether for women or students of color or LGBT students, are critical spaces of identity formation. Rhoads (1997b) argues against "the notion that students' strong identification with racial, gender, and sexual identity groups contributes to campus divisiveness and harmful self-segregation" (p. 517). Indeed, he cites Hurtado, Dey, and Trevino's (1994) finding that "students who have a cultural or subcultural base to which they turn for support are able to reach out and engage in serious and ongoing communications with other campus and societal groups" (Rhoads, p. 517). Certainly the experiences of Alix (with the homophobic roommate and team) and Ashley (with the ADJB complaint) echo this finding; participation as a student leader connected them to critical social supports and enabled them to persist in other campus endeavors, including academics, work, and athletics.

Finally, we see a number of ways to strengthen and expand our study that will build on the findings described in this paper and form a foundation for more fully addressing the larger research question regarding the relationship between involvement in LGBT student leadership and development as a leader and an LGBT person. We plan to interview more of the student leaders of MBLGTACC, including some who graduated before we began data collection. We plan a focus group of all students who have been interviewed, and data from group interactions would provide a very useful and interesting way to examine certain "critical incidents" that were raised in one or just a few interviews; triangulation of this sort would also increase the trustworthiness of the data, if not the analyses and interpretation. We are looking forward to re-coding data using an open coding plan and grounded theory methodology; although the D'Augelli (1994) model seemed to work well, we are interested in seeing what might emerge from the data if a pre-existing coding scheme were not utilized. And, of course, we plan to analyze more fully the intersections of student leadership and identity development, both in terms of LGBT identity and student leader/activist identity.

We are excited by the findings from this preliminary phase of the study. When conducting exploratory qualitative research it is never clear if, indeed, there will be anything at all once data are analyzed and interpreted. Even given our biases as educators deeply invested in the learning potential of student involvement in LGBT campus leadership, we were surprised at the depth of students' experiences and the transformative power of involvement in planning the MBLGTACC. We look forward to continuing research in this area and invite other scholars to join us in building a firm empirical foundation for the support of LGBT student leaders and the provision of LGBT campus resources, programs, and services.

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